### SITE VISITORS’ REPORT
Southern Union State Community College
Opelika, AL

**Program Type:** Associate  
**Purpose of Visit:** Continuing Accreditation  
**Date of Visit:** September 23-25, 2014

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nursing Education Unit</th>
<th>Governing Organization</th>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Nursing</td>
<td>Southern Union State Community College</td>
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<tr>
<td>1701 LaFayette Parkway</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opelika, AL 36801</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nurse Administrator</th>
<th>Chief Executive Officer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elaine McGhee, MSN, RN</td>
<td>Glenda Colagross, EdD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Chair</td>
<td>Interim President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: (334) 745-6437, ext. 5529</td>
<td>Telephone: (334) 745-6437, ext. 5101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax: (334) 745-6342</td>
<td>Fax: (334) 745-3680</td>
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<tr>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:emcghee@suscc.edu">emcghee@suscc.edu</a></td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:gcolagross@suscc.edu">gcolagross@suscc.edu</a></td>
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#### State Board of Nursing Approval Status
- **Agency:** Alabama Board of Nursing  
- **Last Review:** November 2013  
- **Outcome:** Full Approval  
- **Next Review:** November 2014

#### Accreditation Status (Program)
- **Agency:** Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing  
- **Last Review:** Fall 2006  
- **Outcome:** Continuing Accreditation  
- **Next Review:** Fall 2014

#### Accreditation Status (Governing Organization)
- **Agency:** Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges  
- **Last Review:** 2006  
- **Outcome:** Reaffirmation of Accreditation  
- **Next Review:** 2016
SITE VISIT INFORMATION

I. INTRODUCTION

Site Visit Team:

Chairperson
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Member
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Chair, Division of Allied Health and Public Services
Wayne Community College
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Goldsboro, NC 27534
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E-mail: pfeiffer@waynecc.edu

ACEN Standards and Criteria Used: 2013

Program Demographics:

Year nursing program established: 1977

Faculty:
Number of faculty teaching full-time in the associate program: 12
Number of faculty teaching part-time in the associate program: 16

Students:
Total enrollment: 247
Full-time: 21
Part-time: 226

Length of program:
72 credits; five (5) semesters

Additional program options/tracks:
LPN-to-ADN option: 72 credits; six (6) semesters
LPN-to-ADN Track II: 72 credits; five (5) semesters
Paramedic-to-ADN option: five (5) semesters
Additional locations:
**Valley Campus:** 16 miles from the main campus; visited by the team
**Wadley Campus (no nursing courses):** 45 miles from the main campus; visited by the team

**Third-Party Comment:**
The nursing education unit had a reasonable process for soliciting third party comments. The methods used to announce the accreditation visit to the program’s communities of interest included e-mail invitations sent to all Health Sciences Advisory Committee members and affiliated clinical agencies; written notices posted in area hospitals; and a notice placed in the *Valley Times News* on September 12, 2014.

Fourteen (14) community members attended the public meeting. An Alabama State Senator described positive experiences with the nursing program through the “Kids Check Plus” and “Teach Flu a Lesson” programs with which the students and the faculty have been involved for several years. A County Probate Judge and the President of the Opelika Chamber of Commerce commented on the community involvement of the students and faculty. A representative of the Department of Postsecondary Education and the Director of Secondary Schools in Chamber County described the nursing program’s leadership in curriculum, development, and education in the state. The Director of Marketing at East Alabama Medical Center (EAMC) Lanier and the Assistant Vice President/CFO at EAMC Opelika described the students and graduates as assets to their facilities. They commented that 65% of the staff nurses are graduates of Southern Union State Community College (SUSCC). Four (4) attendees were from area school districts, and all shared positive comments related to their relationships with the nursing program. Three (3) attendees were from SUSCC and offered positive comments.

Third-party written comments were not received in response to the solicitation.

**Interviews:**

**Individual Conferences**
Elaine McGhee, MSN, RN, Program Chair
Glenda Colagross, EdD, Interim President
Sandra Hughley, BBA, AAS, Director of Human Resources
Kathy Reynolds, MLS, BA, Director of Learning Resource Center, Opelika Campus
Michele Wimbish-Jones, MS, Librarian, Opelika Campus
Catherine Stringfellow, BS, Registrar, Wadley Campus
Clarissa White, BS, Transcript Evaluator, Wadley Campus
Robin Brown, MEd, BS, Director, Valley Campus
Ann Brown, MS, MSLS, Librarian, Valley Campus

**Group Conferences**
College Administrators
Linda North, PhD, RN, Dean of Academics
Rhonda Davis, MSN, RN, Dean of Health Sciences
Ben Jordan, MBA, CPA, Vice President of Finance and Administrative Services
Tiffany Sanders, MS, LBSW, Dean of Student Services
Gary Branch, MA, Dean of Student Development
Darin Baldwin, PhD, Dean of Technical Education and Workforce Development
Steve Spratlin, MBA, Associate Dean of Instructional Programs

Nursing Faculty
Tiffani Chidume, MSN, RN, CCRN, Instructor
Barbara Demus, MSN, RN, Instructor
Tawyna Cash, MSN, RN, IBCLC, Instructor
Stephanie Huff, DNP, MSN, RN, FNP-BC, Instructor
Southern Union State Community College
Associate

Penny Walden, MSN, RN, Instructor
Judy White, MSN, MA, RNC, Instructor
Jan Martin, MSN, RN, FNP, Instructor
Kellie Byrd, MSN, RN, CNOR, Instructor
Chris Reed, MSN, RN, Instructor
Lisa Shiver, DNP, RN, Instructor
Sarah Howell, MSN, RN, Instructor
Sandra Spann, MSN, RN, EMT-P, Instructor

General Education Faculty
Beverly Corley, MEd, BS, English Instructor
Valarie Boyd, MSEd, Mathematics Instructor
Joseph Hayes, MSEd, Microbiology Instructor
Kim Jones, EdS, MSEd, BS, Reading Instructor
Linda North, PhD, RN, Dean of Academics

Support Services Staff
Melinda Clanton, AS, Health Sciences Admissions Clerk
Nancy Bramlett, MBA, BS, Health Sciences Advising and Academic Advisor Coordinator
Pam Jones, BS, AA, Financial Aid Director
Melissa Todd, MSHRM, BBA, AAS, Financial Aid Coordinator
Marcus Johnson, MS, Health Sciences Clerk
Kathy Ragsdale, Secretary to the Dean of Health Sciences
Mercedes Richardson, Receptionist, Valley Campus

Nursing Managers and Representatives
Cathy Arrington, BSN, RN, Education Services Coordinator, West Georgia Health Systems
Shannon Shelton, BSN, RN, Education Services Director, West Georgia Health Systems
Keisha Lyles, ADN, RN, Nurse Manager, Oak Park Nursing Home
Mia Beveridge, BSN, RN, Staff Nurse, East Alabama Medical Center (EAMC), SUSCC Graduate
Anita Boleware, ADN, RN, Unit Manager, Cardiac Special Care, EAMC
Darlene Wilson, ADN, RN, Staff Nurse, EAMC, SUSCC Graduate
Kendal Smith, ADN, RN, ER Manager, Clay County Hospital
Harry Clifton, ADN, RN, Staff Nurse, Jackson Hospital, SUSCC Graduate
Laura B. Harris, BSN, RN, Clinical Educator, Baptist Medical Center East
Linda Jenkins, RN, Director of ER, EAMC Lanier, SUSCC Graduate
Joni Winter, RN, NP, West Georgia Health System, SUSCC Graduate
Jamie Perkins, ADN, RN, Kennestone and Wellstar, SUSCC Graduate
Nick Ray, BS, RN, NRP, EMS Program Faculty, SUSCC Graduate
Amy Roberts, MS, RN, Staff Nurse, Oak Park Nursing Home, SUSCC Graduate
Panesha Reynolds, MS, RN, Nurse Manager, Oak Park Nursing Home, SUSCC Graduate
Melody Denam, ADN, RN, Nurse Manager, EAMC
Jason Banks, BSN, BS, RN, Administrator, Oak Park Nursing Home
Ann Fisher, MSN, RN, Chief Nursing Officer, Clay County Hospital
Lindsey Ryll, BSN, RN, Academic Coordinator, Jackson Hospital
Cindy Daniel, ADN, RN, Director, Direct of Inpatient Care, EAMC, SUSCC Graduate
Linda Cater, RN, Director of Health Programs, Department of Postsecondary Education
Nursing Students
First semester students, n=6
Second semester students, n=8
Fourth semester students, n=6
Fifth semester students, n=8
LPN-to-ADN students, n=1
LPN-to-ADN Track II students, n=1

Classes Attended:
NUR 204
Lisa Shiver, DNP, MSN, Instructor
Fourth semester students, n=38

NUR 106
Judy White, MSN, RN, Instructor
Second semester students, n=36

Clinical Agencies and Facilities:
East Alabama Medical Center Lanier
Medical-Surgical Unit
Valerie Kambietz, BSN, RN, Education Director
Mary Catherine Churnside, BSN, RN, Staff Nurse
Pat Fitts, ADN, RN, Staff Nurse
Shannon Strength, ADN, RN, Staff Nurse, SUSCC Graduate
Steve Fuller, BS, ADN, RN, Staff Nurse, SUSCC Graduate
Candice Coker, ADN, RN, Patient Care Coordinator, SUSCC Graduate
Melanie Reed, ADN, RN, House Supervisor, SUSCC Graduate
Paul Clepp, BSN, RN, Admissions Coordinator, SUSCC Graduate
Penny Walden, MSN, RN, Nursing Faculty, SUSCC
NUR 105 students, n=6

East Alabama Medical Center Opelika
Medical-Surgical Unit, Cardiac Special Care Unit, and Medical Step-down Unit
April Rogers, ADN, RN, Staff Nurse, SUSCC Graduate
Stephanie Causland, ADN, RN, Staff Nurse, SUSCC Graduate
Melody Denam, ADN, RN, Nurse Manager, Seventh Floor
Marilyn Waldon, ADN, RN, Clinical Coordinator, Seventh Floor
Aubri Thorn, ADN, RN, Staff Nurse, SUSCC Graduate
Stacey Tarnowski Jones, ADN, RN, Staff Nurse, SUSCC Graduate
Anita Bolewore, BSN, RN, Nurse Manager, Cardiac Special Care
Jarrett Taylor, BSN, RN, Rapid Response
Chris Reed, MSN, RN, Nursing Faculty
Lisa Shiver, DNP, RN, Nursing Faculty
Stephanie Huff, DNP, CRNP, Nursing Faculty
Patty Cooper, BSN, RN, Charge Nurse, SUSCC Clinical Adjunct
NUR 202 students, n=6
NUR 203 students, n=7

Documents Reviewed:
Catalogs, Handbooks, Manuals
Learning Resource Center Policy Manual/Handbook, current
Southern Union State Community College
Associate

SUSCC College Policy Manual, current
Distance Education Manual, current
Health Sciences Faculty Handbook, 2014-2015
Adjunct Faculty College Policy Manual, current
College Evaluation Manual, current

External Constituencies
Alabama Board of Nursing (ABON) Reports, 2012; 2013
ABON Administration Code 610-X-3
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on College (SACS-COC) Fifth Year Report, 2011
SACS-COC Compliance Certification, 2005
Alabama Community College System (ACCS) DPE Policy 605.02, ACCS Policy Manual
ACCS Mission, Vision, and Core Values, 2013-2014
NLNAC/ACEN Annual Reports, 2011; 2012; 2013
Georgia Board of Nursing Continuing Education Plan Options
Letters from ABON for Continuing Education Provider, 2010; 2014
ACCS Policy 608.01 Workload Guidelines
Grants for Health Sciences, 2012; 2013
Clinical Faculty Academy, 2011
Clinical Agency Required Paperwork and Student Orientation, Fall 2014

Nursing/Governing Organization Documents
Articulation Agreements
  University of Alabama, 2009
  Auburn Montgomery, 2009
SUSCC Strategic Plan, 2013-2018
Budget Reports, 2013; 2014; 2015
Nursing Chair Position Description, current
Nursing Instructor Position Description, current
Faculty Curriculum Vitae, current
Faculty Files
Cohort Default Rate History Report, 2014
Preceptor Assignments, Fall 2012; Spring 2013
Preceptor Letter, Contract, Data Form, Clinical Log
Student Exit Survey Files, 2011-2014
Employer Surveys, 2011-2014
Program Sheets, current
  ADN
  LPN-to-ADN
  LPN-to-ADN Track II
  Paramedic-to-ADN
Full-Time Faculty Orientation Checklist, current
Part-time/Adjunct Faculty Orientation Checklist, current
Faculty Information Form, current
Adjunct Advisor Newsletter, Fall 2014
Faculty Work Schedule, Summer 2014
Faculty Workload Spreadsheet, Summer 2014
Southern Union State Community College
Associate

ADN Curriculum and Program Application, current
Nursing Committee Member Lists, 2011-2012; 2012-2013; 2013-2014
Current Clinical Contracts, 2014-2015

Nursing Unit Minutes
Faculty meeting minutes, 2012; 2013; 2014
Curriculum Committee meeting minutes, 2013; 2014
Adjunct Faculty Development and Support Committee meeting minutes, 2013; 2014
Health Sciences Advisory Committee meeting minutes, 2011; 2012; 2013
Student Nurse Association meeting minutes, 2013
Course Team meeting minutes, 2013; 2014
Program Director and EAMC meeting minutes, 2014

Course Materials
NUR 102, NUR 103, NUR 104, NUR 105, NUR 106, NUR 111, NUR 200, NUR 202, NUR 201, NUR 203, NUR 204
  Course Plans of Instruction
  Course Calendars
  Clinical Schedules
  Course Minutes
  Student Clinical Evaluation Forms
  Examination Item Analysis
  HESI Summary
  Student Work Samples
  Course Syllabi
  Teaching Materials
  Test Blueprints
Philosophy and Program Outcomes, current
Samples of Case Studies, Spring 2014
Course Curriculum Guides
Clinical Evaluation Tool on E*Value, Spring 2014
Student Evaluations on E*Value, Spring 2014
  Classroom
  Clinical Instructors
  Adjunct Faculty
ORI 107 Course Description, College Catalog, 2014-2015
CIS 290C Online Learning Basics Course Description, College Catalog, 2014-2015
Standardized Clinical Paperwork, 2014-2015
Trended HESI Data, Admission-Graduation, 2010-2013
II. EVALUATION OF THE STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

STANDARD 1
Mission and Administrative Capacity

The mission of the nursing education unit reflects the governing organization’s core values and is congruent with its mission/goals. The governing organization and program have administrative capacity resulting in effective delivery of the nursing program and achievement of identified program outcomes.

1.1 The mission/philosophy and program outcomes of the nursing education unit are congruent with the core values and mission/goals of the governing organization.

1.2 The governing organization and nursing education unit ensure representation of the nurse administrator and nursing faculty in governance activities; opportunities exist for student representation in governance activities.

1.3 Communities of interest have input into program processes and decision-making.

1.4 Partnerships that exist promote excellence in nursing education, enhance the profession, and benefit the community.

1.5 The nursing education unit is administered by a nurse who holds a graduate degree with a major in nursing.

1.6 The nurse administrator is experientially qualified, meets governing organization and state requirements, and is oriented and mentored to the role.

1.7 When present, nursing program coordinators and/or faculty who assist with program administration are academically and experientially qualified.

1.8 The nurse administrator has authority and responsibility for the development and administration of the program and has adequate time and resources to fulfill the role responsibilities.

1.9 The nurse administrator has the authority to prepare and administer the program budget with faculty input.

1.10 Policies for nursing faculty and staff are comprehensive, provide for the welfare of faculty and staff, and are consistent with those of the governing organization; differences are justified by the goals and outcomes of the nursing education unit.

1.11 Distance education, when utilized, is congruent with the mission of the governing organization and the mission/philosophy of the nursing education unit.

Commentary:

Southern Union State Community College (SUSCC), located in east central Alabama, is part of the Alabama Community College System (ACCS), governed by the Alabama State Board of Education. SUSCC is a two-year public community college with three (3) campus locations. The ACCS developed a state-wide common nursing curriculum that was implemented by the associate program in 2004. The associate nursing program is offered at the Opelika Campus. One (1) nursing course in the LPN-to-ADN option is taught at the Valley Campus, which was toured by the site visitors. The Wadley Campus is the location of the Human Resources Department; it was also toured by the site visitors in order to review the faculty and student records.
The mission, vision, and values of the ACCS guide the colleges in the System; these were verified in a review of the ACCS website. The SUSCC mission statement as listed in the College Catalog (p. 10) supports the ACCS mission, vision, and values. The associate nursing program’s philosophy was verified to be congruent with those of the ACCS and SUSCC as illustrated in Table 1.1A in the SSR (p. 15). Interviews with the College President, the nurse administrator, and the faculty verified the congruency. Common elements among the statements included accessibility, affordability, academic education, workforce development, and teaching and learning in order to develop knowledge and skills for entry-level employment.

The associate nursing program outcomes of human flourishing; nursing judgment; professional identity; and spirit of inquiry were verified in interviews with the nurse administrator and the faculty to be congruent with the mission, vision, and core value statements of ACCS and SUSCC. The Interim President described how the nursing program “fits into the community.” She noted that the nursing program is the “highlight of the technology programs” offered at the College. She described the nursing faculty and nursing administration as “innovators” in the state regarding associate degree nursing education and as leaders in the use of online institutional effectiveness and technology to enhance student learning in the College.

The nurse administrator and the faculty are represented in the governance of the College through participation in various standing committees. Interviews with the Interim President, the nursing faculty, and the nurse administrator confirmed that the nurse administrator represents the faculty on College councils as described in the SSR (pp. 18-25). The Dean of Health Sciences is also a member of the Executive Council. Interviews with the nurse administrator and the Interim President verified that the faculty participate in College governance through the Faculty Senate and through participation in multiple standing committees. Tables 1.1B and 1.2 in the SSR (pp. 18-25) illustrate the participation of the nurse administrator, the nursing faculty, the staff, and the students on the College’s twelve (12) standing committees and the standing committees, sub-committees, and ad-hoc committees within the Department of Nursing. A review of meeting minutes and interviews with the faculty verified their involvement and leadership in governance activities at SUSCC.

Interviews with the Interim President verified that the students participate in the governance of the College as representatives on the Institutional Effectiveness Council. The College has an active Student Government Organization in which students can participate. A review of the Health Sciences Advisory Committee meeting minutes confirmed the participation of the nursing students in the meetings. Interviews with the students and a review of faculty meeting minutes verified that the students participate in the Department meetings as class representatives.

The SSR (pp. 25-27) identifies the communities of interest as the Health Sciences Advisory Committee, a local hospital representatives, and state-wide ACCS committees. The Advisory Committee, which is composed of hospital, nursing home, and community agency representatives; the nursing faculty; the nursing students; and program graduates, meets annually. Interviews and a review of meeting minutes verified that following the general Health Sciences Advisory Committee meeting, communities of interest for the associate program meet. Multiple program outcomes are shared, including the licensure examination pass rates, program completion rates, and job placement rates; input from the communities of interest is obtained.

Monthly meetings are held with the Education Director for East Alabama Medical Center (EAMC), where the majority of the clinical learning experiences for the nursing students are held. A review of meeting minutes verified that updates for the associate program are discussed. According to the nurse administrator, these meetings have facilitated communications with the Medical Center on an ongoing basis.
The nursing faculty, the Dean of Academics, the Dean of Health Sciences, and the nurse administrator at SUSCC have been active in the development and proposed revisions to the state-wide licensed practical nurse (LPN) and associate degree nursing (ADN) curricula. Members of the faculty and the Dean of Academics have made multiple presentations at other colleges throughout the state to introduce the proposed concept-based curriculum. The Director of Health Programs for the Department of Postsecondary Education described the leadership role of the faculty, the nurse administrator, the Dean of Health Sciences, and the Dean of Academics in this process.

Articulation agreements have been established with the University of Alabama and Auburn University Montgomery. An additional partnership for the Paramedic-to-ADN option was verified to exist between Calhoun Community College, Gladsden State Community College, and SUSCC. This partnership promotes student access to a mobility option in a low-enrollment course at any single college. The course had been taught via teleconference with all three (3) campuses connected through live feeds in previous years (SSR, pp. 27-28). In Spring 2014, the course was offered as a hybrid course.

An interdisciplinary workshop, the Clinical Faculty Academy, was offered in 2011 and 2013 in partnership with Central Alabama Community College and Chattahoochee Valley Community College. The Clinical Faculty Academy was developed as an orientation for part-time faculty members as to their roles as clinical educators. The Health Sciences Department is a continuing education provider in the state and offers various programs for nurses and nurse educators throughout the year.

Interviews with the faculty identified multiple other partnerships, including the Children’s Expo, a service learning project that brings 300-400 area grade school children to the College. The school children are taught bicycle safety and health concepts by NUR 106 and 204 students. Another partnership offered through the College is Kids Check. This was originally a state program that has been continued by SUSCC; in it, nursing students complete health assessments for up to 400 children in a day. The third partnership is Let’s Pretend Hospital. This is a partnership with Baptist Health that brings school-age children to the College to learn about health careers. During the public meeting, the State Senator and area school district representatives praised these partnerships with the nursing program and SUSCC. Also at the public meeting, the President of the Opelika Chamber of Commerce commented on the community involvement of the nursing program in area health fairs.

The nurse administrator, appointed in Fall 2013, is credentialed with an MSN and has extensive teaching and practice experience. As verified in a review of her curriculum vitae (SSR, pp. 118-119), the nurse administrator’s experience includes 18 years as a nursing faculty member at SUSCC; she was Chair of Nursing for two (2) of those years. For a three-year period from 2005-2008, the nurse administrator served as the Chief Nursing Officer at a local hospital before returning to a faculty role in 2008. In Fall 2013, the previous Chair of Nursing became the Dean of Health Sciences. Interviews verified that the current nurse administrator was oriented and mentored to the role by the Dean. During the visit, the site visitors received a schedule of the orientation, which included nine (9) days with specific items that were reviewed.

The associate program does not utilize program coordinators. Each course has a designated course coordinator. The SSR (p. 75) describes the course coordinators as being charged with reviewing teaching materials and teaching techniques for currency and rigor. Interviews with the faculty confirmed that the course coordinators ensure that the syllabus and course documents contain the required information, and the course team members review the test analysis and blueprints. The course coordinators are not responsible for the evaluation of other faculty members. There was not a specific position description or list of responsibilities for the course coordinator position, which rotates between experienced full-time faculty members.

A review of documents and the faculty files verified that the nurse administrator is experientially qualified for her role and meets the state and College requirements. According to the Alabama Board of
Nursing (ABON) website, the requirements for program administration for a registered nursing program in Alabama includes a minimum of an MSN; at least five (5) years of nursing experience; prior experience in nursing education and nursing practice; and a current, unencumbered Alabama registered nursing license. A review of the SUSCC position description in the SSR (pp. 120-122) identified the requirements as a master’s degree or higher with a major in the assigned subject area and teaching experience at the college level. The nurse administrator meets the requirements of the College and the ABON.

The nurse administrator’s authority and responsibility for the development and administration of the program were verified in interviews and a review of the position description. The nurse administrator receives 75% release time to fulfill the role responsibilities. The SSR (p. 32) states that department chairs are to have 25% release time, and the site visitors confirmed SUSCC’s adherence to this policy in interviews. Interviews with the nurse administrator verified that her teaching workload includes classroom teaching for the NUR 204 course and the student preceptorship. A review of the position description in the SSR (pp. 120-122) and interviews with the nurse administrator and the faculty verified that the responsibilities of the nurse administrator include providing leadership for the Department; overseeing implementation of the curriculum; serving as a liaison to the administrators and other departments in the College; and selecting and orienting part-time/adjunct faculty. Interviews with the nurse administrator verified that she has adequate time to fulfill the role responsibilities.

The nurse administrator has the responsibility of managing the program budget while considering faculty input. As stated in the SSR (p. 53) and verified in a review of faculty meeting minutes and interviews with the faculty, requests for program needs are elicited from faculty members and submitted to the Dean of Health Sciences. The seven (7) steps in the College budget process and the nurse administrator’s role were confirmed to be as stated in the SSR (p. 33). Interviews with the Chief Financial Officer verified the budget process.

A review of documents verified that the policies for faculty and staff hiring, academic rank, promotion, salary and benefits, academic freedom, and termination are consistent with those of community colleges in the ACCS (SSR, p. 34). Differences in policies for the nursing faculty relate to workload calculation. The State Board of Education identifies 15-16 credit hours per term with a maximum of 30 contact hours over five (5) days each week. Interviews and a review of documents verified that the nursing faculty maintain an average of 20-24 student contact hours with a total of 35 hours per week, including committee work and office hours. The workload for faculty is reduced in the summer. Additional differences were verified to be based on the requirements of clinical agencies.

Distance education has been offered in the past for NUR 111, the Paramedic-to-ADN mobility course. As noted, the course has been offered via teleconference in conjunction with other area community colleges. A review of the College mission, the Distance Education Policy Manual, the philosophy of the nursing program, and interviews with the nurse administrator and the faculty verified the congruency of the use of distance education with the mission, philosophy, and policies of the program and the governing organization. In the 2013-2014 academic year, NUR 111 was offered in a face-to-face format (SSR, p. 36). Interviews with the faculty verified that the course was defined by the College as a hybrid course, and the students could learn skills and take examinations on campus. Other course materials and information are distributed via Canvas and Camtasia.
Summary:

Strengths:

- Strong leadership and commitment to state-wide curriculum revisions/development
- Community partnerships

Compliance:

The program is in compliance with the Standard.
STANDARD 2
Faculty and Staff

Qualified and credentialed faculty are sufficient in number to ensure the achievement of the student learning outcomes and program outcomes. Sufficient qualified staff are available to support the nursing education unit.

2.1 Full-time faculty hold a minimum of a graduate degree with a major in nursing.

Full- and part-time faculty include those individuals teaching and/or evaluating students in classroom, clinical, or laboratory settings.

2.2 Part-time faculty hold a minimum of a baccalaureate degree with a major in nursing; a minimum of 50% of the part-time faculty also hold a graduate degree with a major in nursing.

2.3 Faculty (full- and part-time) credentials meet governing organization and state requirements.

2.4 Preceptors, when utilized, are academically and experientially qualified, oriented, mentored, and monitored, and have clearly documented roles and responsibilities.

2.5 The number of full-time faculty is sufficient to ensure that the student learning outcomes and program outcomes are achieved.

2.6 Faculty (full- and part-time) maintain expertise in their areas of responsibility, and their performance reflects scholarship and evidence-based teaching and clinical practices.

2.7 The number, utilization, and credentials of staff and non-nurse faculty within the nursing education unit are sufficient to achieve the program goals and outcomes.

2.8 Faculty (full- and part-time) are oriented and mentored in their areas of responsibility.

2.9 Systematic assessment of faculty (full- and part-time) performance demonstrates competencies that are consistent with program goals and outcomes.

2.10 Faculty (full- and part-time) engage in ongoing development and receive support for instructional and distance technologies.

Commentary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Faculty</th>
<th>Doctoral</th>
<th>Master’s</th>
<th>Baccalaureate</th>
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<td>Part-Time</td>
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<td>5</td>
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At the time of the site visit, there were twelve (12) full-time faculty members teaching in the program. A review of faculty transcripts verified that all full-time faculty are credentialed with an MSN. In addition, two (2) full-time faculty members hold a doctorate of nursing practice (DNP). At the time of the site visit, all budgeted full-time faculty positions were filled. A listing of full-time faculty members was verified to be as described in the SSR Faculty Profile (pp. 42-44).
During the site visit, an updated part-time faculty profile sheet was provided. Sixteen (16) part-time faculty members were teaching in the program at the time of the site visit. A review of transcripts and faculty files verified that eleven (11) part-time faculty members are credentialed with an MSN, and five (5) hold a BSN as their highest degree in nursing. Two (2) of the BSN-prepared part-time faculty members are enrolled in MSN programs with expected completion dates in December 2014 and December 2015. A progress report for both actively enrolled part-time faculty members was reviewed onsite. The number of part-time clinical instructors varies each semester depending on student enrollment. The site visitors reviewed documents and verified that SUSCC has demonstrated a steady progression toward meeting the minimum of 50% of part-time faculty holding a graduate degree in nursing.

The site visitors verified that all full- and part-time faculty credentials meet the requirements of the ABON as verified in a review of the Administrative Code on the ABON website; the ACCS; the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC); and the governing organization. The faculty, dually licensed in Georgia as required by clinical agencies in Alabama, also met the Georgia Board of Nursing (GBON) faculty requirements as verified by a review of the GBON rules and regulations.

Preceptors are utilized in the NUR 204 Transition to the Profession of Nursing course in the fifth semester of the program. Preceptors are selected by the clinical liaison/educator at each clinical facility, and preceptor data sheets are collected each time a preceptor is utilized. The data sheets document the educational background, clinical background, and contact information of the preceptors. These documents are maintained by the Department of Nursing and were reviewed during the visit. Preceptors receive a manual, which was reviewed onsite by the site visitors; it clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities of the preceptors, the students, and the faculty. The faculty maintain the ultimate responsibility for evaluation of the students’ achievement of the course objectives. The faculty are responsible for visiting the students and the preceptors at least once during the rotation or more often if a need is identified. Each contact is documented on a preceptorship evaluation tool reviewed onsite.

The number of full-time nursing faculty members is sufficient for achievement of the student learning outcomes and program outcomes. The nursing program admits an average of 56 new students twice each year in the fall and spring. Additional students are admitted through mobility options, including the LPN-to-ADN mobility option; Track II of the LPN-to-ADN option for LPNs who have completed the state-wide practical nursing curriculum in the ACCS within the previous two (2) years; and the Paramedic-to-ADN mobility option.

According to the ABON Administrative Code (Chapter 610-X-3-.02), the required faculty-to-student ratio in acute care clinical settings is 1:8. The College complies with the ABON requirements in addition to individual institutional requirements and restrictions. Specific units in the clinical facilities such as pediatrics, emergency, intensive care, and maternal-infant may require lower faculty-to-student ratios as verified in a review of clinical schedules available onsite.

Class sizes in didactic and skills laboratory instruction are not limited by the ABON. The campus skills laboratory is coordinated so that the instructor is present to demonstrate clinical skills and to supervise the practice activities in the simulated skills laboratory. Additional nursing faculty members are available as needed, depending on the complexity of skills being learned and demonstrated. A full-time nursing faculty member is the coordinator of the simulation laboratory for all health science programs. The SUSCC nursing program does not employ additional practice laboratory personnel. All full-time faculty member workloads include time in the simulation laboratory and the clinical skills laboratory. The nursing faculty teach content based on their experience; the didactic content is team-taught by two (2) or more instructors, depending on the expertise of the faculty members.

The nursing faculty are required to work 35 hours per week in accordance with ACCS Policy 608.01 Workload Guidelines as reviewed onsite. The nursing faculty members maintain 22-24 contact hours per
week with students, including theory and simulation laboratory instruction, tutoring, and clinical learning experiences. The remaining hours are used for committee assignments and course preparation. The nursing faculty workload is comparable to non-nursing faculty workloads. The faculty confirmed the comparability of their workload with those of faculty teaching in other departments on campus and in the ACCS. Work schedules for the nursing faculty are posted outside the individual instructor’s office and are also available in the nurse administrator’s office.

The nursing faculty maintain expertise and demonstrate scholarship and clinical practice in their area of responsibility through multiple activities. The majority of faculty members hold memberships in professional organizations such as the NLN, the Alabama League for Nursing, the Emergency Nurses’ Association, the Association of Operating Room Nurses, and Sigma Theta Tau as verified in a review of the annual Faculty Information Form (FIF) in the personnel files. Three (3) of the nursing faculty members are family nurse practitioners (FNPs); one (1) is certified as a critical care nurse (CCRN); one (1) is certified as a lactation consultant; and one (1) is certified in maternal/newborn nursing. A review of faculty files verified that the faculty maintain expertise through continuing education as required for license renewal in Alabama. Two (2) full-time faculty members are ACEN site visitors. As noted, some of the nursing faculty and the Dean of Academics are currently offering presentations to other community college nursing faculty in the State of Alabama on a proposed concept-based curriculum.

The Department of Nursing utilizes staff members in a variety of positions, including four (4) full-time and two (2) part-time staff members as described in the SSR (p. 49). Interviews with the nursing faculty and the nurse administrator verified the importance of the staff roles to the nursing program. The systematic evaluation plan (pp. 146-147) contains an expected level of achievement that describes what staff positions will be maintained to achieve the program goals and outcomes. The site visitors were not able to verify any means for the faculty or the nurse administrator to assess the sufficiency of the staff positions.

Interviews with the faculty and the nurse administrator verified that there is a College-wide orientation for all new full-time faculty members. Additionally, newly hired full-time nursing faculty are assigned mentors within the Department who orient them to their areas of responsibility. Interviews with the most recently hired faculty members verified that they were assigned a faculty mentor and completed the checklist. A review of faculty files verified the completion of the checklist. A clinical instructor orientation verification is conducted for part-time clinical instructors by the course coordinators; documentation of the process was verified onsite by the site visitors.

The SUSCC Evaluation Procedures Manual, which was reviewed onsite, outlines the policy for evaluating the faculty and the staff. All new faculty and staff members are considered on probation for three (3) years. Probationary faculty members complete the FIF and undergo a classroom observation by a supervisor. The students complete annual evaluations of the faculty in the classroom and clinical learning experiences. Following completion of the FIF, a conference is scheduled with the nurse administrator until non-probationary status is achieved; the probationary period for the faculty is three (3) years.

After completion of the probationary period, a rotational schedule for evaluation is prepared by the Director of Human Resources for non-probationary faculty and staff. The Director of Human Resources verified that all non-probationary faculty members are in a three-year rotational plan for a three-part evaluation. If selected in the rotation, a faculty member completes an FIF and undergoes a classroom observation, student evaluations, and a face-to-face conference with the nurse administrator. Non-probationary faculty members outside of the rotational plan must complete only the FIF and submit it on an annual basis to the nurse administrator for approval by the deadline.

Interviews with faculty and the nurse administrator confirmed that in the Department of Nursing, student evaluations of the faculty are conducted each semester regardless of whether the faculty are in the rotational plan. These student evaluations of the faculty are completed online in a program called
E*Value. The students confirmed that they have opportunities to evaluate the faculty in the classroom and clinical learning experiences. In addition, all faculty members develop annual goals and assess the achievement of the previous year’s goals, including the faculty members who are not in the evaluation rotational schedule.

The part-time faculty members are evaluated by students in the E*Value system and by the nurse administrator on an annual basis. E*Value is a computerized system that allows the students to evaluate their daily clinical performance and receive feedback from the faculty electronically. The students also evaluate the courses and the instructors using this system. A review of documents in the E*Value system verified that the process is utilized in an ongoing manner. Interviews verified that the results of the student evaluations are shared with the part-time faculty members when they meet with the nurse administrator.

The nursing faculty reported ongoing development and support for instructional and distance technologies. Interviews confirmed that formal and informal training sessions are available for the faculty. The SUSCC Distance Education Policy and Procedures Manual was reviewed; the Manual delineates responsibilities, rights, procedures, policies, and best practices for faculty members participating in distance education. A faculty skills checklist is utilized for online instructors. The faculty confirmed that they have adequate instructional and technology support. The nursing program offers one (1) hybrid course, NUR 111, which uses the Canvas Learning System and Camtasia for a portion of the instruction.

Compliance:

The program is in compliance with the Standard with the following area needing development:

- Ensure there is a mechanism to assess whether staff support is sufficient to meet the needs of the faculty, students, and nursing program.
STANDARD 3
Students

Student policies and services support the achievement of the student learning outcomes and program outcomes of the nursing education unit.

3.1 Policies for nursing students are congruent with those of the governing organization, publicly accessible, non-discriminatory, and consistently applied; differences are justified by the student learning outcomes and program outcomes.

3.2 Public information is accurate, clear, consistent, and accessible, including the program’s accreditation status and the ACEN contact information.

3.3 Changes in policies, procedures, and program information are clearly and consistently communicated to students in a timely manner.

3.4 Student services are commensurate with the needs of nursing students, including those receiving instruction using alternative methods of delivery.

3.5 Student educational records are in compliance with the policies of the governing organization and state and federal guidelines.

3.6 Compliance with the Higher Education Reauthorization Act Title IV eligibility and certification requirements is maintained, including default rates and the results of financial or compliance audits.

3.6.1 A written, comprehensive student loan repayment program addressing student loan information, counseling, monitoring, and cooperation with lenders is available.

3.6.2 Students are informed of their ethical responsibilities regarding financial assistance.

3.6.3 Financial aid records are maintained in compliance with the policies of the governing organization, state, and federal guidelines.

3.7 Records reflect that program complaints and grievances receive due process and include evidence of resolution.

3.8 Orientation to technology is provided, and technological support is available to students.

3.9 Information related to technology requirements and policies specific to distance education are accurate, clear, consistent, and accessible.

Commentary:

The student policies of the nursing program, reflected in the SUSCC Health Sciences Division Nursing Program Student Handbook, are congruent with those of the College and are accessible to all students. The Nursing Program Student Handbook was updated in Summer 2014 after the site visitors initially received the SSR. The updated version of the Handbook was available and reviewed onsite. Interviews with the students verified that the nursing program student policies are publically accessible, nondiscriminatory, and consistently applied. The student policies are listed in the 2014-2015 Student Handbook and College Catalog and in the 2014-2015 Health Sciences Division Nursing Program Student Handbook. In addition, the policies are listed on the College website.
The differences in policies for the nursing students are related to a competitive selection process; progression; re-admission; computerized testing; and transfer requirements. Table 3.1 in the SSR (pp. 54-55) delineates the nursing student policies that differ from those for other students at the College. Additional nursing policies exist to ensure compliance with the requirements of the clinical agencies and the ABON. In interviews, the students were able to clearly articulate knowledge and awareness of the policies specific to the nursing program.

The Nursing Program Student Handbook serves as a guide to performance and conduct for students in the nursing program. The students receive an electronic version of the Handbook during orientation and at the beginning of each semester; they sign a written acknowledgement of receipt of the Handbook, which is kept in the student files in the nursing office. This was verified by the site visitors in a review of student files onsite.

Consistent and comprehensive program information is provided to the public in the College Catalog and on the College website with the exception of the point-ranking system for admission. The College Catalog describes that there is a competitive admissions process using a point system; a review of the College website confirmed that the detailed application for admission, including a clear description of how points are awarded as well as an applicant checklist, is published and accessible for students to download. The site visitors verified through interviews that the students clearly understood and could articulate the process for ranking and admission into the nursing program.

Public information concerning the nursing program is clear, accessible, and accurate as verified in a review of the 2014-2015 Student Handbook, the College Catalog, the Nursing Program Student Handbook, and the College website. Prior to arrival at the Opelika Campus, the site visitors were able to access the 2013-2014 Nursing Program Student Handbook via Canvas and on the College website. Upon arrival, an additional review of the College website confirmed that the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 Handbooks are available. The site visitors noted a discrepancy in the number of credits published for the Paramedic-to-ADN mobility option; the College Catalog and College website reflect 27 credits, the correct number, but the Nursing Program Student Handbook incorrectly lists 35 credits. The faculty verified that the length of the Paramedic-to-ADN option is 27 credits as published on the website and in the College Catalog. Through faculty interviews and a review of both versions of the Nursing Program Student Handbook, the site visitors clarified that the 2014-2015 version had been recently updated and contains an error. A review of documents verified that the ACEN information, including the address and the website, is accurate in all publications and on the website.

As stated by the faculty and verified by the site visitors, changes in policies, procedures, and program information are clearly and consistently communicated to the students in a timely manner through e-mails, announcements on Canvas, and announcements made in class. In interviews, the students confirmed that they receive notification of changes in policies and procedures in the formats described. In addition, the students provided the example of notification of the change in the grade rounding policy for examination scores. The students stated that they received a letter and an e-mail, and the policy was published in the course syllabus and announced on Canvas. Through a review of the Nursing Program Student Handbook (p. 55), the site visitors verified the existence of a statement of disclaimer that relates to changes in policies, costs, curriculum, course content, calendar, or any items contained in the Nursing Program Student Handbook.

Interviews verified that student services are commensurate and appropriate to the needs of the nursing students as described in the SSR (pp. 56-58). A list of services was reviewed in the Student Handbook and College Catalog (p. 11). In a meeting with the College deans and administrators, the site visitors verified the availability of free tutoring services and disability services for students with special needs who provide appropriate documentation prior to the start of the semester. The site visitors verified that the College has a dedicated advisor for students in the Health Sciences Division as described in the SSR (p. 57). All services are available to students at all campus locations of the program with the exception of the
business office, which is available on two (2) of the three (3) campuses. Business services are also available online.

Library services are available through the Learning Resource Centers on all campuses during specific hours. Representatives from the Financial Aid Department provided detailed information regarding the types of aid available to the students. The financial aid staff provide assistance with completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and, if necessary, refer students to the federal student loan website for resources and the process for counseling students regarding their responsibilities for repayment.

Through a review of course descriptions in the Student Handbook and College Catalog, the site visitors confirmed that ORI 101 Orientation to College and ORI 107 Student Survival Skills are designed to assist the students with orientation to the College environment and the development of strategies for student success. The ORI 107 course is required for all Health Sciences Division students except for transfer students. Interviews with the faculty, the Health Sciences Division advisor, and the admissions coordinator verified that the nursing students are required to attend an informational session designed to provide comprehensive information about the application process for nursing. Interviews with the students confirmed that they have access to all student services as described in the SSR. The students complete a graduate survey at the time of graduation that includes assessment of the student services offered at SUSCC.

A review of documents and interviews with the Registrar verified that student educational and financial records are maintained in accordance with state and federal guidelines. The two (2) locations for student records are on the Wadley Campus, where educational and financial records are maintained, and on the Opelika Campus within the nursing program, where all immunization records, health records, application packets, signed policy acknowledgment forms, and program-specific documentation are maintained.

The site visitors conducted a review of twenty-five (25) randomly selected nursing student records, including those for traditional, LPN-to-ADN, LPN-to-ADN Track II, and Paramedic-to-ADN students, and verified that the records are maintained in accordance with the policy of the program. The records were found to be complete and included policy acknowledgment forms, immunizations, licenses, and CPR certifications. The immunizations and other clinical documentation requirements such as current CPR certification are scanned and maintained electronically through the use of the E*Value system. The site visitors were provided with a step-by-step demonstration of how the E*Value system functions to maintain health and immunization records in an electronic format, including an automatic electronic reminder that is generated for students whose documentation is near expiration. E*Value is maintained by an administrative assistant with the assistance of a nursing faculty member. Access to E*Value student records is password-protected and limited to authorized personnel. The student files maintained in the nursing office are securely maintained in locked file cabinets in a room with a locked door.

Interviews with the Financial Aid Director at the Opelika and Wadley campuses confirmed that financial aid records are maintained in compliance with the policies of the governing organization and state and federal guidelines as stated in the SSR (p. 63).

Compliance with the Higher Education Reauthorization Act Title IV eligibility and certification requirements is maintained as verified in interviews with the Financial Aid Director at the Wadley and Opelika Campuses. The 2011 three-year student loan default rate for the College is 22.6%, and the 2010 two-year default rate is 13.5% according to a review of the Cohort Default Rate History List and the FY 2011 Three-Year Official Cohort Default Rate Notification Letter. The Financial Aid Director stated that since the default rate has risen since the two-year audit in 2010, a unit planning outcomes goal of a default rate of less than 15% has been established. A plan is being developed, and funds have been allocated to hire a default management service to assist with strategies to reduce the current default rate for the College.
The students who utilize financial aid are referred to the federal student loan website in order to access information related to their responsibilities for repayment through a comprehensive program that provides information, counseling, monitoring, and cooperation with lenders. During a meeting with student services personnel, a site visitor confirmed that first-time borrowers must complete loan entrance counseling, financial awareness counseling, and exit counseling through this website and must successfully pass a quiz that assesses their knowledge of the content. A review of the SUSCC financial aid webpage confirmed clear and detailed information regarding hours of operation and encouraging messages to students to visit the financial aid offices for assistance. The financial aid personnel described the process of certifying student eligibility, the letter of notification, the hand-outs that are available online, and the process for assisting the students with appeals when necessary.

A review of the 2014-2015 College Catalog (pp. 12-18) and the Nursing Program Student Handbook (pp. 23-24) verified the definition and procedures for addressing complaints and grievances for the purpose of achieving resolution as described in the SSR (p. 64). The nurse administrator provided information related to eight (8) complaints that have occurred in the past three (3) years. Four (4) of the eight (8) complaints documented did not constitute program complaints according to the definition of the governing organization. The four (4) complaints/grievances that met the definition related to a pinning ceremony concern, a grade appeal, a gender equality complaint, and a complaint about a change in policy about which students had received timely notification. All complaints received due process through informal or formal processes with evidence of resolution.

Interviews with the faculty and the students verified that orientation to technology occurs at various points in the nursing program. As stated in the SSR (pp. 64-65) and verified in a review of the course description and syllabus of CIS 290C, the students receive orientation to technology when they take their first academic course at SUSCC. CIS 290C Online Learning Basics is required as a co-requisite. In interviews, the students stated that they received intensive orientation to technology during ORI 107 Student Survival Skills. The students confirmed that they are oriented in the nursing program to E*Value and the computerized testing. Interviews with the students and the faculty verified that the students are also oriented to the use of Nursing Central, an electronic collection of supportive textbooks. The faculty and the students also verified that additional orientation to technology is provided at the beginning of each course if needed to support any requirements within the course.

In interviews with the faculty, the site visitors verified that technology support is provided as described in the SSR (p. 65). The students can request assistance from the health science faculty, the Information Services Department, or the Coordinator of Distance Learning. In interviews with the students, the faculty, the nurse administrator, and the Director of the Learning Resource Center, the site visitors verified that information related to technology requirements is accurate as stated in the SSR (pp. 65-66). The students receive a SUSCC e-mail address that is considered their professional method of communication. The College provides wireless Internet access and offers access to computer laboratories and various modes of technology through the Learning Resource Center and through multiple computer centers visited on the Opelika and Valley Campuses. In interviews with the faculty, the site visitors verified that the students are required to purchase an iPod and a software application, Nursing Central. The nursing faculty assist the students with orientation to this software.

Summary:

Compliance:

The program is in compliance with the Standard with the following area needing development:

- Review and revise program documents (paper and electronic) to ensure that information intended to inform the public is accurate, clear, consistent, and accessible.
STANDARD 4
Curriculum

The curriculum supports the achievement of the identified student learning outcomes and program outcomes of the nursing education unit consistent with safe practice in contemporary healthcare environments.

4.1 The curriculum incorporates established professional standards, guidelines, and competencies, and has clearly articulated student learning outcomes and program outcomes consistent with contemporary practice.

4.2 The student learning outcomes are used to organize the curriculum, guide the delivery of instruction, direct learning activities, and evaluate student progress.

4.3 The curriculum is developed by the faculty and regularly reviewed to ensure integrity, rigor, and currency.

4.4 The curriculum includes general education courses that enhance professional nursing knowledge and practice.

4.5 The curriculum includes cultural, ethnic, and socially diverse concepts and may also include experiences from regional, national, or global perspectives.

4.6 The curriculum and instructional processes reflect educational theory, interprofessional collaboration, research, and current standards of practice.

4.7 Evaluation methodologies are varied, reflect established professional and practice competencies, and measure the achievement of the student learning outcomes.

4.8 The length of time and the credit hours required for program completion are congruent with the attainment of identified student learning outcomes and program outcomes and consistent with the policies of the governing organization, state and national standards, and best practices.

4.9 Practice learning environments support the achievement of student learning outcomes and program outcomes.

4.10 Students participate in clinical experiences that are evidence-based and reflect contemporary practice and nationally established patient health and safety goals.

4.11 Written agreements for clinical practice agencies are current, specify expectations for all parties, and ensure the protection of students.

4.12 Learning activities, instructional materials, and evaluation methods are appropriate for all delivery formats and consistent with the student learning outcomes.

Commentary:

In 2009, a state-wide Health Advisory Committee was established to review nursing programs and to ensure that contemporary practice standards were being met. The initial state-wide curriculum was developed by faculty members from colleges across the state to include a philosophy, plans of instruction (POIs), syllabi templates, and lesson plans using the licensure examination test plan and the nursing process as a guide.
In 2012, the SUSCC nursing faculty were granted permission from the Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education to review and revise the POIs and syllabi to incorporate the NLN competencies and the Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) competencies. The revised POIs were implemented in Spring 2014. Table 4.1A in the SSR (p. 69) includes the revised student learning outcomes (SLOs) for the program. The concepts within the curriculum include human flourishing; patient-centered care; nursing judgment; safety; informatics; professional identity; teamwork and collaboration; spirit of inquiry; evidence-based practice; and quality improvement.

The 2013-2014 Nursing Program Student Handbook contains the previous philosophy and organizational framework, which is composed of the four (4) major concepts of nursing, nursing process, human needs, and the health-illness continuum. These concepts are foundational to all learning in the program and are reinforced in each nursing course as verified in a review of course syllabi and the POIs. The framework also includes eleven (11) content threads, which are progressively developed throughout the curriculum to ensure a logical flow and progressive integration of concepts from simple to complex. The eleven (11) curriculum threads are communication, lifespan, nutrition, pathophysiology, cultural diversity, technology, critical thinking, pharmacology, legal/ethical responsibilities, teaching-learning, and roles of the nurse. These concepts are consistent with the philosophy that guides the curriculum to enable students to achieve the program outcomes (Nursing Student Handbook, 2013-2014, pp. 6-8). Upon review of the course syllabi and clinical evaluation tools, it was evident that there is consistent integration of the concepts and the SLOs throughout the course outcomes/competencies.

A review of the 2014-2015 Nursing Program Student Handbook and course syllabi verified that the conceptual framework and course outcomes were updated to reflect the faculty’s adoption of the NLN and QSEN competencies. This process influenced the revision of the clinical performance evaluations, course assignments, and test item blueprinting to incorporate human flourishing (patient-centered care); nursing judgment (safety and informatics); professional identity (teamwork and collaboration); and the spirit of inquiry (evidence-based practice and quality improvement). It was evident in a review of all course documents that the program SLOs and course SLOs are used to organize the curriculum, guide the delivery of instruction, and evaluate student progress.

The curriculum is reviewed and evaluated by the faculty for rigor and currency as evidenced by a review of the course team meeting minutes, the faculty meeting minutes, and interviews with the faculty. A review of curriculum meeting minutes and faculty meeting minutes verified the involvement of the faculty in the revision of evaluation tools, course syllabi, and POIs. There is a daily self-performance evaluation completed at the end of each clinical day by the students that has been modified to specifically evaluate the SLOs. Customized standardized examinations through HESI, which evaluate the NLN and QSEN competencies, are utilized as the final examination in each course.

Interviews with the faculty and the students verified that the curriculum content demonstrates progression from simple to complex through the complexity of disease processes and patient acuity. The students and faculty described the POIs as the curriculum guide for each course. The didactic content is identified in each syllabus in segments called modules. Each module within a course reflects the program SLOs (graduate educational competencies), which are applicable to the module, exemplar learning activities, and course learning outcomes (SSR, pp. 70-72). A comparison of course outcomes from the first semester NUR 102 course to the fourth semester NUR 204 course verified the progression in the content from simple to complex knowledge. Through a review of course documents, the site visitors verified that the evaluation methods measure the students’ achievement of the SLOs.

The general education courses support and enhance the education of the professional nurse. In interviews, the general education faculty discussed conferring with the nursing faculty about general education and science courses. The nursing courses are supported by content in sciences, humanities, psychology, and mathematics (SSR, pp. 74-75). Interdisciplinary collaboration was evident in interviews with the nursing faculty.
and general education faculty. The general education faculty stated that potential nursing students are easily identified because they are “motivated, organized, and focused.”

In interviews with the nursing faculty and the general education faculty, it was evident to the site visitors that the general education courses create a foundation for the didactic nursing instruction and clinical practice that lead to the competencies necessary for graduation. The general education faculty stated that they meet with the nursing faculty annually to review student progress related to the general education courses. The general education faculty provided examples of the modifications that they have made to their courses to benefit the nursing students, including writing papers related to healthcare issues and using American Psychological Association (APA) citation format in English. A microbiology professor commented that he promotes discussion on the study of microorganisms, their relation to the health field environment, and the spread of disease.

A review of the course syllabi and course outcomes verified that the curriculum incorporates aspects of cultural, ethnic, and socially diverse concepts in didactic and the clinical learning experiences. The regional healthcare needs are addressed through theory, clinical, and community-based student learning experiences. Cultural competence is introduced during the first semester of the program in NUR 102, and then integrated throughout the curriculum in the didactic and assignments in the clinical settings. In interviews, the faculty identified modules in each semester that integrate cultural competence activities into the course.

A review of the faculty meeting minutes and interviews with the faculty verified the incorporation of educational theory, research, and evidence-based practices (SSR, pp. 78-82). The faculty base their teaching on adult learning, constructionist, and meaningful learning theories. Interviews with the faculty verified that they provide different learning strategies to engage the adult learner, including case studies, simulation activities, and skills laboratory experiences. The faculty described being aware of what the students have previously learned and involving the students as active learners through the use of “flipped classrooms.” The faculty described how the program offers a variety of options and has clinical experiences relevant to the content that help the students to meet the SLOs. The faculty verified that constructionist cognitive theory is demonstrated through courses that are relevant, build on knowledge from previous courses, and engage students in active learning. The students utilize informatics in medication administration via an automated medication dispenser and electronic documentation.

Interviews with the faculty verified collaboration with other faculty and students within the College to provide learning opportunities for the students through disaster drills with EMS students (SSR, p. 79). The Director of Health Programs for the Department of Postsecondary Education commented on the collaboration of the faculty to present the proposed concept-based curriculum model to other colleges in the state. A review of course syllabi and interviews with the faculty verified that specific course outcomes related to interdisciplinary collaboration in the clinical learning experiences are met when students work alongside the staff nurses, social workers, physical therapists, emergency medical personnel, and occupational therapists. The clinical assignments promote interdisciplinary collaboration and best practices, which was verified during clinical observations through interviews with the students and the hospital staff. The students participate in several community-based programs that promote community awareness. In addition, collaborative experiences are provided in the simulation laboratory with students from other disciplines in the Health Science Division.

In a review of course curriculum guides, recurrent learning activities that guide the delivery of instruction and the evaluation methods throughout the curriculum were evident. The course grade is determined from grades in theory content and clinical performance. The theoretical component of each nursing course is evaluated through the use of unit examinations and a comprehensive standardized HESI final examination. An average of 75% or higher is required for progression in all nursing courses. All testing is conducted on campus and online using computers. All nursing courses, with the exception of NUR 103 Health Assessment, utilize the HESI examinations as the comprehensive final examination; this final
examination is worth 25-50% of the final course grade. A review of course examinations confirmed that a testing blueprint is used by faculty in the development of other course examinations.

The evaluation methods were verified to be varied and designed to measure the achievement of course requirements and the SLOs. Methods used include concept maps; care plans; class projects; instructor-made examinations; HESI specialty examinations; the HESI comprehensive assessment examination taken the final semester in the final nursing course; clinical evaluation tools; simulation; and skills validation. Interviews and a review of data verified that data results from the standardized tests are collected, aggregated, trended, and used for program assessment. The instructor-made examinations were reviewed for NUR 102, NUR 202, and NUR 203 and confirmed to demonstrate progression in the level of difficulty of the test items. Interviews with the faculty verified that a higher percentage of questions addressing application and analysis are used in the final course. The faculty reported, and a review of documents confirmed, that an item analysis is completed after examinations are administered.

All of the clinical evaluation tools are based on the SLOs. In interviews, the students were able to articulate what was expected of them at each level of the nursing program to be successful in the classroom and in clinical learning experiences. The clinical grading criteria are clearly stated in the guidelines provided to the students in the Nursing Program Student Handbook and on the course syllabi. As noted, a daily self-performance evaluation is completed at the end of each clinical day by the students with feedback from the faculty members, who also evaluate the students based on the identified SLOs (SSR, pp. 69-70). Using E*Value software, the students are rated on a scale from zero (0) to three (3) points. A score of three (3) indicates that student performance was above the expected level; a score of two (2) indicates that student performance was adequate and appropriate for the level; a score of one (1) indicates that the student may return to the clinical learning experience but must contact the full-time faculty within one (1) week for a plan of action; and a score of zero (0) indicates that the student cannot return to the clinical learning experience until a meeting with the full-time faculty to determine a plan of action.

The outcomes for the clinical learning experiences were verified to reflect the course SLOs. Several evaluations from NUR 202 and NUR 203 were reviewed by the site visitors; the evaluations demonstrated progression in expectations of the students. A summative evaluation at the end of the semester is conducted by the full-time faculty member, and all daily formative evaluations are reviewed and awarded an average grade.

The didactic instruction and supervised practice follow a POI; a POI for each nursing course is available on the ACCS extranet website. The POI includes a course description, credit hour distribution, prerequisite courses, co-requisite courses, professional competencies, instructional objectives, and a detailed description of the modules. Each module includes specific SLOs, student performance objectives, learning objectives, and related clinical/laboratory skills. The syllabi are developed from the POIs. The syllabi include course competencies, course objectives, module objectives, methods of evaluation, and the attendance policy. The instructor refers to the POI when preparing a lecture and planning for clinical learning experiences. The POI is a teaching guide for the faculty members and is not available to the students. The course syllabi are available to the students at the beginning of each semester within Canvas, the learning management system.

The length of the nursing program is congruent with the attainment of identified outcomes and is consistent with the policies of the governing organization, state and national standards, and best practices. The traditional associate program option is 72 credits in length, including 30 credits of general education and 42 credits of nursing content, and is designed to be completed in five (5) semesters. The students are advised to take the prerequisite courses before entering the nursing program, but this is not a requirement. The College policy provides for a 1:1 credit-to-contact-hour ratio for didactic content and a 1:3 credit-to-contact-hour ratio for clinical learning experiences and the nursing laboratory experiences.
Although the curriculum is designed to be completed in five (5) semesters, many students take longer to complete the program. The state-wide ranking system for admission encourages the students to take this strategy as a significant number of points are allocated for grades earned in the required science courses. As noted, admissions into the nursing program are competitive. The admissions process, published in the SUSCC College Catalog and posted on the nursing webpage, was reviewed onsite by the site visitors.

The SSR (Table 4.8A, p. 83) identifies the core nursing courses for the AAS degree. NUR 204 is a four-credit course with two (2) credit hours for theory and two (2) credit hours for clinical learning experiences. The students in this course are required to complete 120 hours of preceptorship, which is not congruent with the credit-to-contact-hour ratio of 1:3. Interviews with the faculty confirmed that they had made the decision that more clinical hours were needed in the course than are required by the state-wide curriculum.

There are three (3) additional admission options to the nursing program, including two (2) for LPNs and one (1) for paramedics. The LPN-to-ADN mobility option requires 14 general education credits as prerequisites, which must be taken over two (2) semesters as one (1) science course is a prerequisite for the other. The LPN students who graduated from an ACCS program and apply within two (2) years can complete the program in five (5) semesters through the LPN-to-ADN Track II option. LPNs from other systems or those who have been out of school for longer than two (2) years can complete the program in six (6) semesters as they are required to take NUR 200, a five-credit course that emphasizes assessment and validation of selected theory. Upon successful completion of NUR 200, the students enter into the second semester of the traditional program. At the time of the visit, there were LPN-to-ADN mobility students enrolled in the program.

The Paramedic-to-ADN mobility option requires 27 general education credit hours as prerequisites; these can be completed in two (2) semesters. Students must take NUR 111, which is a twelve-credit course, before admission into NUR 202, a fourth semester nursing course in the traditional option. The Paramedic-to-ADN option can be completed in five (5) semesters. At the time of the visit, there were four (4) students in their final semester who entered through this option. As noted during the site visit, the 2014-2015 Nursing Program Student Handbook was found to contain outdated information that was not consistent with the 2013-2014 Handbook, which includes the correct information. This was brought to the attention of the nurse administrator, and the site visitors were told misinformation will be corrected. The 2014-2015 College Catalog and program brochures were noted to include accurate information.

The clinical agencies are monitored and selected by the faculty and the nurse administrator (SSR, p. 87). The students evaluate the clinical agencies at the end of each experience. A review of meeting minutes verified that the data results are analyzed and compared to the program outcomes and the SLOs for each course. A review of the Health Sciences Advisory Committee meeting minutes verified that the findings are shared at these meetings. The clinical environments are varied, and evaluations from the students demonstrate that clinical placements allow opportunities for varied clinical learning experiences that prepare the students for their role as a registered nurse. At the time of the visit, all contracts were verified to be signed and current. Each included termination agreements and identified the roles and responsibilities of the facility staff and the faculty. The students attending the clinical learning experiences receive a facility orientation, which include the CDC guidelines for hand-washing, restraint safety, the National Patient Safety Goals, and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines.

A review of the syllabi and interviews with the faculty identified that innovative learning activities are utilized by the faculty in the classroom that promote critical thinking. In addition, there was evidence of the use of simulation experiences in all nursing courses. Canvas, the learning management system, is used in all courses and allows the faculty to interact with the students via-e-mail and hold live discussion as well as discussion boards.
There are no distance education course offerings in the nursing program. NUR 111 Paramedic-to-ADN Mobility was presented in the hybrid format through the use of Canvas as verified in a review of the team meeting minutes of March 2013. Assigned content was presented and discussed through pre-recorded lectures or in a face-to-face format; written assignments were completed online or during scheduled laboratory time; all testing was completed on campus. In Spring 2014, the Paramedic-to-ADN option was offered in a face-to-face format. All content, as outlined by the state-mandated curriculum, is included in these courses. Through a review of course minutes of 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, the site visitors verified that classroom and laboratory instruction are provided onsite as specified in each course syllabus and calendar.

Classroom Observation:
A session of NUR 204 Role Transition for the RN was observed; 38 students were in attendance. The class took place in a circular amphitheater with seating for approximately 70 students. The seats slide out and allow for a continuous table in each row. The room contains overhead lights that allow for dimming if necessary. As the classroom contains theater-style seating, visibility is possible from all areas, and all students were able to see the large whiteboard screen that displayed a PowerPoint presentation. The sound system is supported by microphones and speakers. The content of acute renal failure was delivered by the faculty lecturer using PowerPoint. The faculty member engaged the students during the lecture by having the students each take a turn and present a brief overview of the content on the slide; appropriate responses were received from the students. Several of the students were noted to be using a laptop computer or an iPad to take notes. Many students also had their textbooks open for reference. The instructor provided an environment that allowed for free-flowing discussion.

A session of NUR 106 Maternal and Child Nursing was observed; 36 students were in attendance. The classroom was equipped with a lectern, computer, screen, overhead projector, tables, and chairs. The students were noted to be engaged in the topics, and many were observed taking notes using laptops and tablets. The topics of the class were hemophilia, Christmas disease, and von Willebrand disease, which were delivered using a PowerPoint presentation. The faculty member spoke using an even pace; paused to ask questions; confirmed that the class understood the content before moving forward; and consistently promoted critical thinking. The PowerPoint presentation was well organized and contained graphics that highlighted key points of the lecture. The faculty member integrated NCLEX-style questions within the presentation, including questions addressing the SLOs that had been identified as needing improvement through student HESI data results. The outcome presented during the classroom observation involved communication. The faculty member embedded questions that addressed the students demonstrating knowledge about the topic while using correct communication techniques.

Clinical Observations:
A clinical observation was conducted at East Alabama Medical Center (EAMC) Lanier in Valley, Alabama. The site visitors interviewed the education coordinator, who is responsible for the orientation of students to the facility and for all clinical assignments in the EAMC system. She noted that she works closely with the SUSCC administration for clinical placements and preceptor assignments.

In the medical-surgical unit, the site visitors interviewed six (6) students who described how they receive their assignments; identify the clinical focus for each experience; and communicate and work with the nursing staff. All students had administered medications and were actively documenting assessments. The students noted that they do not have computer access but work with the nursing instructor for medication administration.

The site visitors interviewed three (3) graduates of the program who were employed in various positions. The manager of the two (2) medical-surgical units, a program graduate, described SUSCC as providing her with a “great” education. Another staff nurse who also was a graduate of SUSCC agreed and shared positive comments related to her preparation for the role as a registered nurse.
Another clinical observation was conducted at EAMC Opelika in Opelika, Alabama, a 400-bed hospital where the site visitors observed students and faculty members from NUR 200, NUR 202, and NUR 203 on three (3) units. The site visitors interviewed sixteen (16) students and eight (8) graduates during the visit. It was evident from the interviews with two (2) nurse managers, a clinical coordinator, and a program graduate that SUSCC graduates are well prepared clinically and academically for transition to practice at graduation. The graduates of SUSCC were interviewed about the nursing program, and all consistently reported that they “loved” the program and faculty and felt ready for practice upon graduation.

During the observation, the students were in the midst of preparing for medication administration and skills. The site visitors verified the process used by the faculty to make patient assignments and the method in which the students are evaluated. In addition, the site visitors verified that the students each care for one (1) to two (2) patients, and positive relationships exist between the faculty and students and the EAMC nurses and staff. The students also confirmed that the clinical instructors assigned their patients and the method for receiving reports on their patients; reviewed the objectives with them for the day; helped them in establishing their plans for the day; and prepared them for skills and medication administration.

In addition, the students reported that the faculty encouraged them to “look at the patient as a whole” and document their weekly self-evaluations using the E*Value system. The students described writing their evaluations and patient care experiences in detailed narrative in accordance with the QSEN and NLN competencies that are included in the SLOs. The students appeared excited about their clinical experiences and reported strong support from the EAMC staff. One (1) student was shadowing with the rapid response team registered nurse, who also demonstrated the use of a telehealth unit for the purpose of a remote neurology consult for a patient whom they had assessed and to whom they had responded.

The nurse manager for the medical-surgical telemetry unit was a SUSCC graduate and described open communications between the EAMC nurses and staff and the SUSCC students and faculty. She also expressed that the staff look forward to the return of the SUSCC students each semester. The SUSCC graduates described opportunities for tuition reimbursement and scholarships through EAMC and the ability to pursue a BSN onsite via Auburn University, Montgomery.

**Summary:**

**Compliance:**

The program is in compliance with the Standard with the following areas needing development:

- Ensure that the credit hours awarded are consistent with the actual number of required hours in the clinical learning experiences for all courses.

- Ensure that the length of the program for all cohorts, including prerequisites, is consistent with national standards and best practices.
STANDARD 5
Resources

Fiscal, physical, and learning resources are sustainable and sufficient to ensure the achievement of the student learning outcomes and program outcomes of the nursing education unit.

5.1 Fiscal resources are sustainable, sufficient to ensure the achievement of the student learning outcomes and program outcomes, and commensurate with the resources of the governing organization.

5.2 Physical resources are sufficient to ensure the achievement of the nursing education unit outcomes, and meet the needs of the faculty, staff, and students.

5.3 Learning resources and technology are selected with faculty input and are comprehensive, current, and accessible to faculty and students.

5.4 Fiscal, physical, technological, and learning resources are sufficient to meet the needs of the faculty and students engaged in alternative methods of delivery.

Commentary:

Interviews with the College administrators, the faculty, and the students verified that fiscal resources are sufficient to ensure the achievement of the nursing education unit outcomes and are commensurate with the resources of the governing organization. Funding is received through appropriations from the State of Alabama; student tuition and fees; and grants. The Department of Nursing received several federal grants between 2010-2014 that were used to purchase equipment and pediatric/obstetrical high-fidelity simulators.

The College budget reflects that nursing faculty salaries are comparable to those of faculty in other departments throughout the College. The ACCS uses a set salary schedule for all full-time instructors. A review of documents verified that the Department of Nursing budget is comparable to those of other departments or higher in most instances. The faculty contracts and departmental budgets were reviewed onsite. Interviews with the faculty and a review of faculty meeting minutes verified that the faculty have input into the budget process. The resources are adequate to support professional development within the nursing education unit.

The health sciences building was completed in 2001. This building houses the program’s physical resources, including classrooms, laboratories, and offices, which are exceptional and ensure the achievement of the nursing education unit outcomes and meet and exceed the needs of the faculty, the staff, and the students. All of the physical resources were noted to be well-lighted and designed to be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The site visitors confirmed the adequacy of the physical resources through a tour of the facilities.

The skills laboratory, designed to simulate a hospital setting, consists of ten (10) beds divided into two (2) spacious rooms. A separate medication skills laboratory is also available. An interdisciplinary simulation laboratory is available for use by the Department of Nursing in the technical building, which is located across campus from the health sciences building. Four (4) high-fidelity simulators; three (3) medium-fidelity simulators; and multiple low-fidelity models and simulators are available for instruction and practice in the simulation laboratory. Each classroom is equipped with SMART board technology or symposiums, wireless Internet access, and multimedia equipment. In addition to high-fidelity simulators, the program has access to a variety of models and nursing supplies for student use for the achievement of the SLOs and program outcomes. The nursing students confirmed the adequacy of the nursing equipment and resources.
The health sciences building contains three (3) computer laboratories ranging from eight (8) to sixty (60) computers. The classroom and laboratory capacities and amenities were confirmed to be as listed in the SSR (pp. 98-99). In addition, the health sciences building contains administrative, faculty, and staff office spaces, a student lounge, a faculty workroom, and a faculty lounge/break-room. The buildings on campus are equipped with wireless Internet access for the students. All full-time faculty have a spacious, private office containing typical office furnishings, a computer, and equipment. The faculty have access to a conference room for meetings.

The Valley Campus was toured by the site visitors. The LPN mobility course, NUR 200, is the only nursing course taught at this location. The classroom has a capacity of 25 and is equipped with SMART classroom technology, wireless Internet access, and multimedia equipment. The skills laboratory on the Valley Campus has four (4) beds with various mannequins and models for student use. Several computer rooms are available in addition to laptops for student testing. The students travel to the Opelika Campus for activities in the simulation laboratory.

Student evaluations of physical facilities are assessed each semester as a part of the course evaluations. The facilities are consistently rated as satisfactory or very satisfactory by the students (SSR, p. 101). In interviews, the faculty were not able to confirm having input or participating in the evaluation of physical resources and services.

The learning resources are selected by the faculty and are comprehensive and accessible to the faculty and the students. The site visitors toured the Learning Resource Centers (LRCs) on the Opelika Campus and the Valley Campus and confirmed that the resources and support are congruent with the information in the SSR (pp. 101-105). The LRC on the Opelika Campus has an open design with an audio-visual room and a computer laboratory with twenty (20) computers. There were also six (6) computers in the open area; other technology includes two (2) laptops available for sign-out to the students. The Valley Campus has a computer room with twenty-five (25) computers and four (4) computers in the open area.

Library holdings include references on reserve as well as those available for circulation. The LRCs at the Opelika and Valley Campuses utilize the Alabama Virtual Library, through which the nursing students can access several health-related databases; the students confirmed that they use these resources. The majority of journal articles available to the students are full-text, and there are two (2) collections of e-books. The holdings are only reviewed for currency every five (5) years. The site visitors noted several holdings in the collection older than five (5) years; however, the Director of the LRC verified that older holdings are not removed until newer editions are available. Through an interview with the Director of the LRC, the site visitors also verified that the SUSCC nursing faculty have input into the purchase of books, videos, and resources necessary to support nursing. All library services and information are accessible through the library’s website. The library has a 24-hour connectivity feature for students that need assistance. The orientation to library services by the librarian is scheduled by the nursing faculty for the nursing students.

The fiscal, physical, technological, and learning resources are sufficient to meet the needs of the faculty and students and ensure the achievement of the SLOs. Technology support is provided on both campuses for the students and the faculty. The Canvas learning management system is used for providing program materials in all nursing courses, including the one (1) hybrid course, NUR 111. Interviews with the faculty verified that the Management Information System Department meets their needs.
Summary:

Compliance:

The program is in compliance with the Standard with the following area needing development:

- Ensure that the faculty participate in ongoing evaluation of the physical resources.

- Ensure that all learning resources are current, including those in the library.
STANDARD 6
Outcomes

Program evaluation demonstrates that students and graduates have achieved the student learning outcomes, program outcomes, and role-specific graduate competencies of the nursing education unit.

6.1 The systematic plan for evaluation of the nursing education unit emphasizes the ongoing assessment and evaluation of each of the following:

- Student learning outcomes;
- Program outcomes;
- Role-specific graduate competencies; and
- The ACEN Standards.

The systematic plan of evaluation contains specific, measurable expected levels of achievement; frequency of assessment; appropriate assessment methods; and a minimum of three years of data for each component within the plan.**

6.2 Evaluation findings are aggregated and trended by program option, location, and date of completion and are sufficient to inform program decision-making for the maintenance and improvement of the student learning outcomes and the program outcomes.

6.3 Evaluation findings are shared with communities of interest.

6.4 The program demonstrates evidence of achievement in meeting the program outcomes.

6.4.1 Performance on licensure exam: The program’s three-year mean for the licensure exam pass rate will be at or above the national mean for the same three-year period.

6.4.2 Program completion: Expected levels of achievement for program completion are determined by the faculty and reflect student demographics and program options.

6.4.3 Graduate program satisfaction: Qualitative and quantitative measures address graduates six to twelve months post-graduation.

6.4.4 Employer program satisfaction: Qualitative and quantitative measures address employer satisfaction with graduate preparation for entry-level positions six to twelve months post-graduation.

6.4.5 Job placement rates: Expected levels of achievement are determined by the faculty and are addressed through quantified measures six to twelve months post-graduation.

**Newly-established programs are required to have data from the time of the program’s inception.

Commentary:

The program has a systematic evaluation plan (SEP) based on the 2013 ACEN Standards and Criteria that includes the required program outcomes. All of the ACEN Standards are clearly addressed, and all of the Criteria are included in the plan with the exception of Criterion 5.4. The components of the evaluation plan include expected levels of achievement (ELAs), the frequency of assessment, assessment methods, data analysis/results, and actions. In addition, the site visitors reviewed one (1) component added by the faculty beginning in Fall 2014 that addresses the assessment of the graduate education competencies (SSR, p. 108).
Many of the ELAs are stated in measurable terms with correlated assessment methods, results of data, and actions taken, including the ELAs for Criteria 1.4, 2.1, 2.3, 2.6, 3.8, 4.1, and 4.11. However, some of the ELAs are restatements of the Criterion such as those for Criteria 1.1, 1.8, 1.11, 3.3, 4.2, and 4.4. In addition, some ELAs do not clearly reflect the intent of the Criterion or the assessment method, and the findings reported do not correlate with the ELA. For example, Criterion 1.9 (SSR, p. 136) has an ELA that relates to faculty input into the nursing budget; no assessment methodology is identified; and the data analysis relates to the budget process and not to faculty input.

Criterion 2.5 (SSR, p. 143) relates to having sufficient full-time faculty to meet the program outcomes. The ELA addresses workload and student contact hours for full-time faculty. The ELA for Criterion 2.7 identifies the actual staff currently utilized by the nursing program but does not identify any means to assess the sufficiency of the staff members, and the assessment methods state that the Dean will complete performance evaluations. For Criterion 4.4 (SSR, p. 172), the ELA is a restatement of the component, and no assessment methodology is identified.

Criterion 4.2 (SSR, p. 167) has an ELA that is a restatement of the Criterion. At the time of the visit, interviews with the faculty and a review of several documents verified that the SLOs are being assessed, and data are trended, aggregated, and analyzed with the results of data used for program changes and improvement. The databases containing measurable results for the SLOs were available for review onsite for each course and program option. Standardized HESI examinations are used throughout the program, and results are reviewed and discussed at faculty and course team meetings. However, the ELA does not reflect the HESI testing, but the data analysis includes these results for the last three (3) years.

Criterion 6.4.4 (SSR, p. 196) addresses measurement of employer satisfaction with graduate preparation for entry-level positions six (6) to twelve (12) months post-graduation. However, the ELA measures overall employer satisfaction with the program, and a review of the survey tool identified that employer assessment of educational preparation was measured, but survey items did not reflect a measure of satisfaction.

In regards to the use of data, the evaluation plan includes an action column that include the actions taken based on the presented data. The site visitors clarified the abbreviations in the action column; actions are represented as “M,” for met or no recommendations needed; “R,” for recommendations; and “D,” for decision based on data presented. Some areas were also noted as “continue no changes.” Several areas are simply stated as met. For Criterion 1.9, the ELA is reflected as met, although there is no identified assessment method for determining the extent to which the faculty have input into the budget.

The plan contains extensive information for some components regarding the use of data for program improvement as seen in Criteria 4.2, 4.7, 4.8, 5.3, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4.1, and 6.4.3. A review of course evaluations onsite provided evidence of the use of data for program changes. In addition, interviews with the faculty and a review of faculty meeting minutes verified that data are used for program improvement. The faculty provided a detailed explanation of actions taken to address a decline in the licensure examination pass rates that was congruent with the description in the SSR (p. 111).

Interviews with the faculty and a review of documents onsite verified that evaluation findings are aggregated and trended by program option, location, and date of completion. As listed in Table 6.4.2 (SSR, p. 114) and verified in interviews with the faculty, the program completion rates are aggregated and trended by program option. The completion rates are also averaged by semester for all cohorts as presented in the SSR (p. 114). The licensure examination pass rates are aggregated by program option and date of completion according to a review of the SEP and the faculty meeting minutes. The employer satisfaction and job placement rates are not aggregated and trended by program option but are averaged by semester as verified in interviews with the faculty.
SUSCC has strong ties to the community and shares evaluation findings formally and informally with the communities of interest. A review of reports verified that the program annually completes the required reports for the ABON and the ACEN. As described in the SSR (p. 110) and verified through a review of the Health Sciences Advisory Committee meeting minutes, SUSCC shares program outcomes and SLO results with the members of the Committee. In addition, the SUSCC faculty meet regularly on a monthly basis with representatives from EAMC. The site visitors confirmed through interviews with the nurse managers and the EAMC clinical coordinator that the nurse administrator shares aggregated program data with appropriate personnel at the clinical agencies as stated in the SSR (p. 110).

**Licensure Examination Pass Rates**
The ELA as stated in the SEP is that the ADN NCLEX pass rates will be 80% or greater. Minimum standard defined by the ABON (2012). ABON began a rolling three-year mean with 80% or greater. An additional ELA is the program’s three-year mean for the licensure examination pass rates will meet or surpass the national mean for the same three-year period. The licensure examination pass rate data are aggregated in the SEP according to program option and date of completion. In Table 6.4.1 in the SSR (p. 111), the licensure examination pass rates are reported as having been above the national mean for two (2) of the past three (3) years. The current year is not included in the table.

A review of documents at the time of the visit verified that the three-year mean for 2011-2013 is 86.9%, which is above the minimum requirement of the ABON. The SSR (p. 111) lists the three-year mean for 2011-2013 as 86.34%. Three (3) years of licensure examination pass rates are presented in the SEP (SSR, pp. 194-195); these data are aggregated by program option and completion date. The site visitors noted that in Spring 2013, the pass rate dropped below 80% for the traditional and LPN-to-ADN Track II students, but the mean for Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 remained above 80% at 83.52%, and the rolling three-year mean for 2011-2013 was 86.9%.

Through a review of the SEP, faculty meeting minutes, and faculty interviews, the site visitors verified that the faculty instituted several actions based on the program’s 2013 licensure examination pass rates, including discontinuation of the rounding of examination scores; the discontinuation of extra points awarded unless students first achieve a score of 75% or above on an examination; the determination of percentages of the use of Bloom’s taxonomy in each course; the use of standardized testing and a review of vendors; provision for opportunities for the faculty to attend workshops for test item-writing skills; the institution of team assignments in clinical learning experiences; and the use of test blueprints to consistent with the licensure examination test plan.

**Program Completion**
The faculty determined that the ACCS standard of 75% completion was not congruent with their goal for the completion rate for the associate program. The ELA is 80% of students will complete the program within 150% of the program length. The ABON and ACCS require completion rates of 75%. The site visitors clarified this difference in a review of published expected outcomes for completion rates, and the faculty clarified that the nursing program decided to maintain the ELA that 80% of students will complete the program in 150% of the program length. Table 6.4.2 (SSR, p. 114) includes completion rates by option and with aggregated data. The ELA has been met for one (1) of the last three (3) years.

Table 6.4.2 contains calculations for all program options with some inaccurate information based on the available data. Fall 2013 is accurate with a 75.3% completion rate. In Spring 2013, there were 69 students admitted with 51 completing in 150% of the program length for a completion rate of 74%; the SSR lists a completion rate of 80.95%. The completion rate in Fall 2012 was 81.5%; this was the only cohort for which the ELA was met. The faculty confirmed that retention and completion have been an issue as described in the SSR (p. 113). The Spring 2014 graduates had a 60% completion rate in 100% of the program length.
Interviews with the nurse administrator and the faculty confirmed that retention strategies have been discussed, and some have been implemented, including revisions to the program outcomes; peer coaching; and correlating course content with laboratory scenarios. The faculty clearly articulated these strategies in interviews.

**Graduate Satisfaction**

There are two (2) ELAs for the measurement of graduate program satisfaction. The ELAs in the SEP are 50% of graduate and employer surveys will be returned, and 90% of graduate surveys will report satisfaction with the program. The program assesses graduate program satisfaction six (6) to twelve (12) months post-graduation. The survey instrument uses a Likert scale with the opportunity to provide qualitative responses.

A review of graduate satisfaction surveys verified the reported program satisfaction rates. The data, including results, the number of respondents, and return rates, are reported by semester. In interviews related to the methods used for increasing the response rates, the faculty stated that they have mailed the surveys. They added personal e-mails to graduate surveys and revised the survey to be more concise. In 2011, the survey was changed to a digital format using the E*Value system, allowing students to update contact information just prior to graduation as stated in the SSR (p. 115). A review of graduate satisfaction surveys verified the reported results with the addition of multiple comments from the students confirming consistent and positive feedback about academic and clinical preparation for practice.

**Employer Satisfaction**

The ELA is 90% of employer surveys will report satisfaction with the program. The faculty confirmed during interviews that sufficient response rates have been difficult to achieve. A review of employer satisfaction surveys demonstrated that survey questions are designed to measure employer assessment of graduate preparation, but they do not specifically define or rate satisfaction. The results were also reported in the SEP as finding that graduates are 100% prepared or well prepared, but some surveys reviewed identified the graduates as adequately or moderately prepared. The majority of surveys reviewed were congruent with the ELA of 90%.

The results of employer surveys provide opportunities for employer feedback regarding areas needing improvement. Examples of areas needing improvement reported in the SEP and verified in a review of employer surveys include needed improvement in the graduates’ abilities in clinical decision-making, problem-solving skills, therapeutic interventions, and time management. The faculty stated that they are continually seeking ideas for ways to improve the response rates on employer satisfaction surveys. The 2013 response rate was 67.5%. The SEP does not include results for 2012, but Table 6.4.4 in the SSR (p. 116) lists seven (7) employer surveys returned with 100% describing the graduates as adequately prepared or well prepared.

**Job Placement**

The ELA is 90% of graduates will be employed and/or 70% will be continuing their education within six (6) months of graduation. Job placement rates in the SSR and SEP do not include the number of responses, but the data are obtained from the graduate surveys, with response rates ranging from 45% to 59%. Interviews with graduates and agency representatives indicated a desire to hire graduates of SUSCC. The ELA has been met for the past three (3) years.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Expected Level of Achievement</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Current Year</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three-year mean at or above the national mean for the same three-year period</td>
<td>2014: 84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensure Exam Pass Rates</td>
<td>80% or greater calculated as a three-year rolling mean.</td>
<td>2013: 76.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Completion Rates</td>
<td>80% will complete the program in 150% of the time.</td>
<td>Spring 2014: 60% in 100% of the program length (n=39)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Fall 2013: 75.3% (n=61)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate Satisfaction</td>
<td>50% response rate 90% of surveys will report satisfaction.</td>
<td>Spring 2013: 100% (51.9% response rate, n=26)</td>
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<td>Fall 2012: 100% (51% response rate, n=40)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employer Satisfaction</td>
<td>50% response rate 90% of surveys will report satisfaction.</td>
<td>2013: 100% (n=27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Placement Rates</td>
<td>90% employed and/or 70% continuing their education within six (6) months of graduation</td>
<td>Spring 2013: 100%</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Fall 2013: 100%</td>
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</table>
Summary:

Compliance:

The program is in compliance with the Standard with the following areas needing development:

- Ensure that all expected levels of achievement are specific and measurable for each component of the evaluation plan.

- Ensure that assessment methods are identified, congruent with the expected level of achievement, and result in meaningful data.

- Develop and implement strategies to collect and trend data by program option and date of completion prior to aggregation for the program as a whole.

- Ensure that evaluation findings are accurate and correlate with the component being assessed.

- Develop and implement strategies to improve the licensure examination pass rates.

- Develop and implement strategies to improve the program completion rates.

- Develop and implement strategies to improve the response rates for graduate and employer satisfaction surveys to ensure sufficient data have been collected and trended for program decision-making.
III. RECOMMENDATION FOR ACCREDITATION STATUS:

Recommendation:

Continuing Accreditation:

Continuing accreditation as the program is in compliance with all Accreditation Standards. Next visit in eight (8) years.